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EGYPTIAN
AND OTHER
VERSES

GEORGE COOKSON



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EGYPTIAN AND OTHER VERSES



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BY
GEORGE COOKSON

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To
MY WIFE

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CONTENTS

EGYPTIAN VERSES

	PAGE
THE LAND WHERE ALL THINGS ALWAYS SEEM THE SAME -	1
SAILS ON THE NILE -	3
AN EGYPTIAN PASTORAL -	4
THE KITE ABOVE THE CITY -	6
EVENING BY THE NILE -	9
IN A PALM GROVE -	10
THE SPHINX -	11
THE GARDEN IN THE DESERT -	13
MOONRISE IN EGYPT -	14
THE BEDOUIN'S GREETING -	15
A KHAMSEEN -	16
AN EGYPTIAN NIGHT -	17
THE MUEZZIN -	18
THE PALACE BY THE NILE -	20
IN RAMADAN -	21

SONNETS ON 'THINGS IN GENERAL'

	PAGE
'NATURE NEVER DID BETRAY THE HEART THAT LOVES HER'	22
BIG TOM, OXFORD	23
TWO WORLDS	24
NATURE AND MAN	25
CONSOLATIONS	26
THE YOUTH OF NATURE	27
THE INNER CHAMBER	28
APOLOGIA	29
'HOUSED IN A DREAM'	30
A PARABLE	31
THE SCHOOL OF THE WORLD	32
SELF-SUFFICIENCY	33
THE SIGN	34
AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT	35
AN ALLEGORY OF LIFE	36
CATO ADDRESSES THE NEW WOMAN	37
THE GREAT POET	38
CANADA	39
THE REALIST. HIS POINT OF VIEW-	40

CONTENTS

ix

	PAGE
NATURAL PIETY - - - - -	41
TWO WAYS FOR LOVE - - - - -	42
JUBILEE, 1897 - - - - -	43
IROQUOIS THEATRE, CHICAGO - - - - -	44
THE SOCIALIST AND HIS DREAM - - - - -	45
THE SOCIALIST AND THE PREACHER - - - - -	46
CARLYLE - - - - -	47
THEOCRITUS - - - - -	48
T. E. BROWN - - - - -	49
CHARLES DICKENS - - - - -	50
IMPORTUNITY - - - - -	51
TO A YOUNG LADY - - - - -	52
A VISION IN THE NIGHT - - - - -	53
FALSE SHAPES - - - - -	54
A PRAYER - - - - -	55

SONGS AND LYRICS

TO MY WIFE WITH THE THREE FOLLOWING SONGS - - -	56
I'M GOING OUT WITH THE TIDE - - -	57
THOUGH MANY MILES AWAY - - -	58
SLEEP, SLEEP, MY DARLING, SLEEP - - -	59
ROSES, RED AND WHITE - - - - -	60

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TELEPATHY	62
MEMORIES	64
TO MY MOTHER	67
DAS LEBENDIGES KLEID	69
THE ATLANTIC LINER	71
SIMILES	73
SAPPHO	75
'POET TO MUSE'	76

THE LAND WHERE ALL THINGS ALWAYS SEEM THE SAME

Two pointed shadows far away,
The Pyramids watch on,
And standing here a man might say,
‘Naught’s new beneath the sun.’

Under a thick-leaved trellised vine,
The sober ox turns round
The water-wheels that creak and whine
With steady drowsy sound.

And from the dark cool well below,
As turn the wheels about,
The brimming jars come up, and throw
A flash of silver out.

Through what long summers of the past,
What countless ages flown,
The wheels have turned, the jars have cast
Their shining water down!

Brown-legged, brown-capped, brown bosom bare,
Under a lebbek's¹ roof,
The fellah still is weighing there
The stone-balanced shadoof.²

The plough that drives its coulter thro'
Yon tilth by hard degrees,
Yoke, oxen, plough, and ploughman too
Worked once for Ramases.

If Pharaoh came, he would behold
No unfamiliar scene ;
All things perform the tasks of old,
And are as they have been.

¹ *Lebbek.* Acacia tree.

² *Shadoof.* An instrument for drawing up water from a canal or well.

SAILS ON THE NILE

WHITE sails that bend above the placid glass
Of the broad river, as the twilight falls,
Is it in cloudland or in waterland
You move? What are you, dimly journeying
Into the silent misty South? Do you
Still urge the black felouka's hull, freighted
With stones or golden grain? Rather, it seems
As you lie gathered in a ghostly troop
About the wan horizon, you are changed
Into aërial presences, a band
Of shy and fugitive spirits, drifted down
From insubstantial cloud-built worlds, as there
You rest and droop faint wings, and then at last,
Somewhere between the pale stream and the sky,
Fall back into the twilight's gentle arms,
With slow and soft surrender of yourselves.

AN EGYPTIAN PASTORAL

DEEP in the glass of the canal,
Which no winds move or mar,
With drooping fans and pillars tall
The palm trees imaged are.

Close to the water's waveless edge
Brown goats and asses stand,
Cropping the scanty herbs that fledge
The banks on either hand.

Outstretched beneath a tamarisk shade
Two Bedouin boys recline ;
One plays a pipe that shepherds played
When Pan was still divine.

The other sings a plaintive song,
Broken with quavers soft,
While hornets sound in golden throng
A bourdon note aloft.

Ah ! would Theocritus were here
To catch the pastoral scene,
The boys—the pipe—the flock—how dear
To him they all had been !

THE KITE ABOVE THE CITY

AFLOAT in bluest leagues of sky,
 I watch the town below ;
 The sun, he sees not more than I,
 Of all the works men do.

Within the teeming city vast,
 Thro' alley, court and lane,
 One penetrating glance I cast,
 And everything is plain.

The strings of camels moving slow,
 Laden with green burseem ;¹
 Each rider gravely to and fro,
 Nods with the nodding team.

The black-veiled women basket-crowned,
 With various fruits therein,
 The water-carrier at his round,
 Bowed 'neath his water-skin.

¹ *Burseem.* A kind of clover.

The sherbet man, his plates of brass
Clashing continually,
Who cries to each one, as they pass,
'Come thirsty soul to me'!

The crone beside her sanded patch,
Who bids the lover wait,
And choose a dusty card, and watch
Her finger write his fate.

The barber, where the circle laugh
To hear his drollery ;
The blind man, tapping with his staff
The road he cannot see.

The box-like shop, whose tiny floor
Is level with the street,
The shopman seated by his store
Of coloured beans and wheat.

At little tables set in rows,
Men slap the trik-trak down,
Or ponder over dominoes,
Sipping the coffee brown.

Beside their carpets, piléd high,
The Persians sit at ease,

Black-bearded, pale like ivory,
Grave waxen images.

All this I see, then set my eye
To bring within its ken,
A vaster vision, and pass by
The humming haunts of men.

The flat-roofed city there outset,
Vast, calm beneath my view,
With mosque and dome and minaret,
Under pellucid blue.

The Nile, that spreads her shining flood
Among the herbage green,
The Pyramids that stand and brood,
Dark monarchs o'er the scene.

Beyond,—the white waste desert, girt
With rolling hills of sand;
The palm-groves at its burning skirt
Like columnned temples stand.

All things are mine, minute and great,
And from man's busy ways
I turn at will, and contemplate
The green, the blue, the space.

EVENING BY THE NILE

EVEN as a man, who, travelling in a dream
Across the forlorn fields of slumberland,
Murmurs of what he sees on either hand,
Even so the river murmurs thro' its stream
Of men and cities dead, a wondrous theme
Of bygone worlds, in words none understand,
While gradual twilight touches with her wand
All forms and shapes of things, until they seem
The ghosts of what they were:—slowly away
The dahabeahs vanish from the eye
And fade between the water and the sky,
Only, against the last smile of the day,
(As fits the symbols of Death's deathless sway),
The Pyramids still hesitate to die.

IN A PALM GROVE

A TEMPLE is the palm tree grove,
Its floor the springing corn,
Its roof the bending fans above,
On pillared stems upborne.

How dark and cool the shadows lie
Across its columned aisles,
And 'twixt the arching boughs on high
How blue the Heaven smiles !

Here might a holy hermit keep
A vigil pure and fair,
And here will I lie down, and sleep
Away all worldly care.

THE SPHINX

THE sacred river murmurs in her ears
Tales of the world's accumulated years ;
Age after age her reverend eyes have seen
Its waters gather, and the land grow green ;
Age after age man comes and looks, and goes,
Abashed before the calm of her repose,
The busy questions of his eager brain
Chilled into silence by that great disdain.
Ah ! hath she, then, no tears for human things,
No quick compassion for man's sufferings ?
And while the tides of life for ever roll
Incessant to the same inveterate goal,
Doth she but gaze, impassive and apart,
Nor strike one chord of love within her heart ?
Surely there pass impatient hours when She,
Behind that mask of taciturnity,
Feeling a heart beat and a bosom swell,
To win a little ease is forced to tell
What she hath compassed in her memory's span
Of the great story of the life of man ;—

When, with the indifferent desert at her feet,
Her lips the lonely-pondered tale repeat,
At which the moon leans from the blue to hear,
And stars draw down in reverential fear?

THE GARDEN IN THE DESERT

BEYOND the wall of mud the burning noon
Quivers upon a waste of lifeless sand,
But in the garden is a pleasant land,
There well-drawn water bubbles out a tune
Leaving the water-pipes, and late and soon
Bees bend the flowers that grow on either hand
Of its small paths, and from the trees that stand
Screening the low, white house, the ring-doves
croon ;
And where a Marshal Niel from crown to root
Festoons a palm-stump, and the shade is deep,
Two Syrian nightingales a courtship keep,
And to each other all day call and flute,
And in and out the larkspurs, without noise,
Soft companies of hawk moths dart and poise.

MOONRISE IN EGYPT

THE low, flat fields are veiled in azure mist,
And in an ample flood of silver sheen
The placid river floats, brimming the green ;
The Pyramids in the clear, distant west
Are black against a sky of amethyst ;
Above yon mud-walled village, in between
A group of palms, a minaret is seen
Twinkling with tiny lamps lit for a feast.

One after one the lesser stars appear
In the deep sky ; but, looking eastward, lo !
What is the glorious effulgent glow
That makes the stars and sky look pale and drear,
What flower upspringing from the desert hills,
That all the world with golden radiance fills ?

THE BEDOUIN'S GREETING

THE firmament of Heaven, and all the host
Of stars, marshalled in shining companies,
Throbbing and beating out in ecstasies
Incessant light :—the silent, waveless coast
Of the great desert, glimmering like a ghost
Beside the living world of green and trees—
My eye knows nothing round me saving these,
And all I am, in them is merged and lost.

My heart beats in my ear—so all alone
I seem—when suddenly, at my right hand,
A gradual footstep crushes the hard sand,
And a voice calls in deep and quiet tone—
‘ Peace unto thee’—O God, I understand
Why man is bound to man, and loves his own!

A KHAMSEEN

A STIFLING amber gloom fills all the air,
And thro' the gloom a sick sun palely peers ;
With fiercely-beating blast that stings and sears
The eyeballs and the nostrils and the hair,
A wind as from a furnace, when men dare
To take the molten metal from its mouth,
Covers the trees with desolating drouth
Of barren sand, the deserts lightly spare.

But, lo ! the North wind comes, and with his might,
Until the sun shines and the skies are free,
Buffets the gathered gloom, and drives apace,
In struggling shapes across the Heaven's face,
Dark tides of sand, which fast before him flee
Like hosts of Titans in tumultuous flight.

AN EGYPTIAN NIGHT

THE tamarisks that stand about the well,
Let down the twilight of their woven hair,
And on the surface of the water there,
Three stars beside a moon immovable,
Like glow worms round a white flower in a dell,
Shine placidly ; far off in many a mile
Of sleeping silver flows the sacred Nile,
Between tall palm-trees standing sentinel.

Westward, beyond the dark verge of the green,
The white wastes of the desert stretch away ;
There solitude and silence hold twin sway,
And no man comes to sow or reap or glean ;
And there the great Sun's labour of the day
Is vain, and all things are as they have been.

THE MUEZZIN.

AH ! let the weary city sleep—still sleep !
Yea, God is great, there is no god but God—
But let the city sleep—why art thou thus
Alone awake ? Lo, upon roof and wall
The noon lies heavy—empty every street,
And all the houses, closely-shuttered, stare
Against the pitiless sun—why, up aloft,
Ringed with the breathless blue, dost thou cry out
Filling the silence ? Thou art all alone,
And no one hears thee save the wheeling kite ;
Who doth keep watch with thee, who now will join
His voice with thine ? Shall thy deep resonant cry
Rouse any sleepers ? Nay, dost thou not hear
The city's deep-drawn regular breath ? Ah ! peace,
Be still ! no man will answer thee—alone,
Alone thou art—and Heaven is far—so far,
Thou canst not reach it with thy cry—nay, though
Thy voice break with its passionate appeal !
Dead, dead, the city lies—only the sun
Wakes, and the kite, and thy deep lonely voice,

But God is great—there is no god but God,
And He shall save the city—therefore, cry,
Cry on great voice! Yea, He will save, though thou
Alone remember Him—if there be one—
One mindful soul—it is enough—therefore
Cry on—one voice—one soul—for all the rest.

THE PALACE BY THE NILE

THE whispering river slides beneath its wall,
And laps against an alabaster stair ;
Behind the palace is a garden, fair
With tangled wealth of rose-bushes and tall
Thick-foliaged orange trees, and over all
The dark spires of the cypress climb the air,
Piercing the lucent blue, and often there
The bulbul sings and aziolas call.

Within the shuttered palace, O how good
The rest at deep midnoon, and in the cool
Of eve the walk among the garden trees,
And then at night to see the river's flood
Strown with large stars! O, 'tis a spot to please
Wise Omar, and his grave and tranquil school.

IN RAMADAN

UPON the parapet of the citadel

I gazed across the vast town at my feet ;
'Twas nigh to sunset, and the heavy heat
Enshrouded all, naught could I clearly tell,
Saving the minarets innumerable,
That rose above the amber mist ; each street
Was hid from view, only the traffic's beat
Mixed with faint voices on my hearing fell.

At last the gold disc of the molten sun

Plunged down the desert hills, whereat I heard
The sudden thunder of the signal gun
Leap out, and lo, at that tremendous word
The great heart of the faithful city stirred,
And rose in a wild cry—the fast was done.

'NATURE NEVER DID BETRAY
THE HEART THAT LOVES HER'

PRATE not to me of Nature loved in youth,
And then forsaken by the riper man,
Who found her arches break when torrents ran,
Whirlpools of actual life with foaming mouth
Raged loud about the pillars of her truth ;
I knew Her, ever since our love began
Unshaked of these, and capable to span
All wear of waters, running rough or smooth.

So be it mine to keep this love with me,
And every day to clasp it closer round,
Until at last arrives the hour profound,
When I would fain a silent watcher be,
What time Death makes his solemn voice to
sound,
Over the troubled waves of Life's loud sea.

'BIG TOM,' OXFORD

THE quiet air throbs with thy solemn sound,
Under the starry silence of the night:—
The almond tree shakes down two blossoms
white,
Which, as they flutter slowly to the ground,
Kiss like faint moths, and eddy round and round;
All else, as thou dost beat out, one by one,
The lapsing minutes, till thy task be done,
Pauses and listens in a trance profound.

Deep bell, heard above those of meaner chime,
Thou art the voice of this sweet city's soul,
Still dreaming of a fairer, nobler goal,
Lest, in the thraldom of this spiritless Time,
Her sons become dull drones, for whom in vain
The martyrs died and poets sang their strain.

TWO WORLDS

On Brandon Hill, Bristol

Two worlds are spread before me now, two spheres
For thought and fancy strangely different ;
Eastward the city reacheth its extent
Of streets, towers, factories, and docks and weirs,
Bringing faint cries and murmurs to my ears,
Beneath a pall of smoke, fitfully shot
With fire, where thro', like to a leprous spot
That slowly spreads, a ghastly moon appears.
Westward the sun hath left the sky red flame,
And hills are black against the living light ;—
No smoke is there—that old, mysterious west,
Which holds far off the islands, whither came
Achilles and the heroes to their rest,
Glows till it leads my fancy out of sight.

NATURE AND MAN

THE moon is hid by sullen clouds to-night,
But mile on mile, till lost in distance dim,
The fields sleep on in unawakened dream,
Glimmering and glooming in a doubtful light,
And as I climb alone the accustomed height
I hear the labour of the town below;
I see the train rush by, whose furnace glow
Makes half its columned line of smoke rose-bright.
And yet, how different a life is here :
Below man toils in empty noise and sweat,
And here in silence Nature rules her sphere,
Perfecting a design more vast, more great,
Still moving all in ordered loveliness,
Still loving man, who trusts her less and less.

CONSOLATIONS

THE straight rain falls upon the misty street,
The sodden leaf strews all the garden green,
The full-fed gutter throws a doubtful sheen
Beneath the lamp post's yellow ray, no feet
Of busy passers on the pavement beat,
Only a cab breaks, lumbering on the scene,
The drip, drip of the rain, that else had been
The single sound that might a listener greet.
This is my world—and yet 'tis good to know
That otherwhere perhaps keen stars entwine
With diamonds a snowy mountain brow,
And some men work on sunny slopes of vine,
And with white feet, upon a golden floor,
Somewhere sea waves are dancing evermore.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

WHEN I have read long hours in History's page
And heard of battles, plague, and civil feud,
Treason and plot, and all the sinister brood
Of fears and perils that infest the stage
Of human life—terror and crime and rage
Of Christain priest, who shows his hands
imbued,
All unabashed, with stains of Christian blood,
It seems as though the sun, in that dark age,
Had never shone, nor trees been green, nor
springs
Flashed laughter thro' their tears ; yet long ago
The cowslips decked as gladly then, as now,
These fields, and yonder maid, who trips and
sings,
Passed here before, with cheeks as red and white,
And all her world was blossom and delight.

THE INNER CHAMBER

MOST men possess a sanctuary, a place
Of silent prayer, whither the soul retires,
Whose darkness angel shapes and holy fires
Illume, wherein they tremble face to face,
With some bright vision of ideal grace,
That is a guiding lantern to their feet,
And fills their ears with heavenly music sweet,
Lulling the turmoil of material days.
Do not believe that few enjoy such hours—
Perhaps this face, you frankly set down thus,
Conceals the service of an impetus
All too elusive for your ready powers—
Yea, and the balance of its soul may be
Sustained by visions further than you see.

APOLOGIA

I CHOSE a soul to follow, and straightway
One came and said:—‘This trust is perilous,
And if you knew the vital impetus,
How fed, that sunward shoots in blossomed spray,
You would be shaken with a wild dismay,
Intolerant of the shadowy incubus
Of potent spell, to hold you cheated thus
With finest fancies moulded out of clay.’

Yea, but at even on a sunlit hill
I saw him stand, and read within his eyes
How he was filled with heavenly harmonies;
God chose him of unquestionable will,
There clothed him with the glory of His wings,
And He knew all his abject shortcomings.

HOUSED IN A DREAM

SHRINED in our sanctuary of thought, are we
Content? Or can this temple of repose
Prove but a prison wall's confinement close,
Where every strain and impulse to be free
Confirms the gaoler egoist's mastery,
Where vision ever more distorted grows,
And beauty fainter like a phantom shows,
Lest Life's embrace should mar her purity?

To him who cries, 'Beware the world's coarse hand
I am for feasting with the few and fit'—
Might we not say, 'Go, leave thy pasture land
Of pampered, fine exclusiveness, and sit
There where Life's ocean thunders on the sand,
Her harmonies may mould a larger wit.'

A PARABLE

SOMETIMES 'tis well to catch the torrent's leap,
And hem it in a narrow channel's bound,
Which shall refresh a little pasture ground,
And give a better grazing for the sheep,
Or make a mill a busy music keep,
So, with the varied season's moving round,
No day has passed but it was useful found,
And ever worked to swell the garner's heap.

But if the torrent has too large a force
For such employ, and hopes to reach the sea
A mighty river grown, split not its course,
For fear if by thy hand it lessened be ;
Some thirsty waste may stay its weaker flow,
And for thy pains a miry marshland grow.

THE SCHOOL OF THE WORLD

WHY set all men amid the coil and stress
Of actual life to prove their force and good,
And bid them battle with the multitude,
And in the noisy and tumultuous press
Propose the only test of usefulness,
Saying to each, 'Thy opportunity
Lies here ; go forth, if thou wouldest worthy be,
And labour there thy fellow men to bless.'

Look you how steadily my candle-flame,
Within the stilly darkness of the room
Lets light on this wise book that I may read,
But, at a breath of wind, 'tis put to shame,
And makes false, giddy shadows of the gloom,
Caper o'er counsel I was fain to heed.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

SOME men there are must move in many ways
Of life, to gain a small intelligence,
Lest, like to goats and sheep, devoid of sense,
Confined within one pastureland to graze,
They grow too sleek to heed or blame or praise ;
Blinded by satisfaction so intense,
They but believe their fellows are more dense
Who hint at aught beyond their narrow gaze.

And others can dwell in a single field,
Nor ever quit its border-fence for more,
And still have all the wisdom life can yield,
And know its secrets to the very core,
And all the book of Nature is revealed
Unto their eyes, and pondered o'er and o'er.

THE SIGN

THE sign—the sign—it burst upon my sight,
Making me hate my hours of faithlessness,
With full clear orb, forbidding my distress;
The moon shone out in silver beauty bright,
Flooding the world with plenitude of light,
Isled for a moment in a lake of blue,
Bastioned with pillared cloud, and then there
drew
Another blackness o'er her sailing flight.

Just when a feeling all too like despair
Crept with a numbing mist across my heart,
And stirred the thought, 'This world shows
nothing fair,
In darkness born, to darkness we depart,'
This vision came, and seemed God's frank reply,
'Is nothing fair? Lo, I am in the sky.'

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

FAREWELL! I know not when again we meet—
But, as a lover takes a lock of hair,
I take what of thy beauty thou canst spare—
Of thyme upon thy brow, a handful sweet,
A leaf of bracken growing at thy feet,
That I may have and carry everywhere
(What though they fade and be no longer fair),
A token of the life thou dost complete.

Oh, dear green hill, for thou hast oftentimes heard
My vows, and knowst the man I seek to be;
It seems my heart of hearts is read by thee,
And, all the visions that my life have stirred,
Have their accredited reality
Thro' thy love's silent, ratifying word.

AN ALLEGORY OF LIFE

CHILDREN we play upon the mountain's base,
And laugh among the leaves and gather flowers
On grassy slopes, nor quit these happy bowers
For higher height—but, older grown, we raise
Our eyes in wistful love unto the place
 The pinewoods hold, and, climbing thither, share
 The peace and dreaming beauty that is there,
And in long reverie live blissful days.

But oft the summer clouds lift up, and show
Above them, pure and white, the mountain's brow ;
 Youth's dreams are done, and we are restless men
Until we sit upon the thrones of snow,
 And, in that silence cold, we wish us then
Children among the leaves and flowers again.

CATO ADDRESSES THE NEW WOMAN

IF only you the Periclean speech
Would take to heart, and still believe your ways
Best ordered, if, even in these modern days,
No fame of you, for good or ill should reach
Our ears, and that the proper task for each
Were bearing warrior-heroes, who should be
True match for those who held Thermopylae,
Then might no pessimist your worth impeach.

But now you must be shrewdly active, here
And here, and flaunt a smart intelligence,
And if men fail in spoken reverence
For that which asks approval everywhere,
You think their frigid, close indifference
Born half of wonder half of jealous fear.

THE GREAT POET

How great the memory of youth's solemn hour,
When out of darkness came the holy fire
That shadowed forth the mastering desire,
He must pursue with every gift and power,
God gave his life as its peculiar dower !

It drives him strongly like a wind yet higher,
It spurs him, if he sometime halt or tire,
It crowns him when he gladdens like a flower.

The sun is not more certain of its course
Than he—the prayers he utters on the hills
Are promise of inevitable force—
All Nature blends and pours her myriad rills
To swell the waters of his eager soul,
That, straining seaward, wide and wider roll.

CANADA

THE men are strong, and own a broad green land
With rivers wide, and great hills forest-clad,
With flower and fruit, and flock and pasture glad,
And cornfields yellowing beneath the wand
Of summer, but there lacks the poet's hand
To take the harp, and with what strength he owns
Smite from its strings a concord of great tones
In praise of all the beauty God has planned.
When shall there burst forth, like a river free,
A bard, who with large soul shall richly glide,
And drain the sweetness of his fair 'countree,'
And bear it down upon his mighty tide
Where, like a sea, the old world waits outside
To add a new voice to her harmony ?

THE REALIST. HIS POINT OF VIEW

HE still believes that Art may find new ways
Of life, if but her followers serve her true,
And cease to merely trick in colours new
The simple loveliness of older days,
Betraying thus but envious amaze
Of that sweet time, when Beauty dwelt so near
The daily walks of men, they had no fear
To make their 'Now' live for time's future gaze.
To-day the 'Now' cries out to Art, 'Awake,
Am I a less divine reality,
Hast thou for me no glorious destiny ?
Of every phase thou must an impress take ;
Behold my power, and quickly homage make,
Lest thou go hand in hand to death with me.'

NATURAL PIETY

THE contest of two souls, and which should win
Most favour ;—one with mouth moulded by pain,
And brow that chronicled an absolute brain,
That brooked no other master's rule within,
Scorning all guides but what it named its kin ;—
The other, fair of form, with eyes that told
How Nature's arms did always him enfold,
And mouth of flowers, kept from the lips of sin.

And God looked down on both from Heaven and
said :

‘ This seeketh Me, but o'er his straining eyes
The world casts up its mists, and he must tread
A path of gloom, and win Me when he dies ;—
That has Me now—because his steps are led
By love that knows Me in My seas and skies.’

TWO WAYS FOR LOVE

Two ways my life would go because of thee—
The world's way in the hope of worldly fame,
That I may see thine eyes, when men my name
Are praising, brighter grow, and thus may be
Less all unworthy of thy love for me
(Even as the world awardeth praise and blame),
And haply make some envious of the claim
Thou hast upon my worship's constancy !

So love doth blind me with mine own conceit,
Until I think upon that better way,
Which is a voice that calls me, night and day,
To live, as if from every pulse's beat,
Thou shouldst have good or ill, and then I know
I serve you better letting the world go !

JUBILEE, 1897

WAST thou not moved, O earth, on that glad day,
Didst thou not tremble thro' thy massy sphere,
When She, whose might thy waves enthronéd
bear,

And whose clear fame strikes, like the morning's ray,
Across thy continents a golden way,
Was honoured by the sons she holds so dear,
With one great voice of thunderous good cheer,
As of the strong sea shouting in its play ?

Did not, O earth, a permeating fire
Run through thy veins, enkindling all thy frame
With tremor of joy's agitating flame,
Till, smitten by Love's breath, thou then didst sound
So sweet a note among the heavenly quire,
As held thy brother orbs mute in their round ?

IROQUOIS THEATRE—CHICAGO

'Mr. ———, the principal comedian, at the first cry of fire came behind the footlights, dressed in his large red wig and queer get-up, and attempted to make a funny speech about his hair having caused a slight conflagration, but he was not heard, and the death rush to the doors began.'—*Daily Paper.*

'THE flame—ah yes—I see you see the flame—
 My wig—that's all—a lock that went astray
 Set up the blaze—nay—in your places stay—
 There's more to tell—no—no—'tis not the same
 Old joke—this fiery wig . . . ' O, in God's name,
 Is he to hold Death with a jest at bay
 For them, and will they not see out the play ?
 Ah fool—brave fool—thy wit is not to blame !

For, while the bright flames fiercer leapt, he stood
 A figure sadder than the Fool of Lear,
 As, in the trance of an immense despair,
 Knowing his mirthless mirth had done no good,
 He saw the appalling Fiend of riotous fear
 Run frantic thro' the tossing multitude.

THE SOCIALIST'S DREAM

(Suggested by a conversation with one of that persuasion.)

'I DREAMED,' he said, 'Christ came to earth again,
He was not mild, but great and terrible,
And told us we had realized our Hell
Even here, and need expect no after-pain ;
Our chiefest cried, ' This fanatic insane,
Some reckless product of plebeian blood,
Disturbs the ordered course of public good
With whirling follies from an unschooled brain.'
But from the sunless mine and furnace heat,
And from the shuddering mill's incessant din,
A host came after Him with willing feet,
And these He showed His power and wisdom told ;
He saw His Church, and did not enter in,
But prayed upon the mountain as of old.

THE SOCIALIST AND THE PREACHER

HE walked with bursting heart and aching sight,
The black town's life about him swarmed and reeled,
In all its hideous turpitude revealed,
And eyes that knew nor flowers nor green nor light
Stared fierce on him, and hunger-faces white
Gleamed out of desolations, which the glow
Of furnace-fires lit up—and moans of woe,
And oaths made loud a thick smoke-folded night.
A preacher told the people there of God,
High on a throne aglow with jewelled flame,
Sceptred he pictured Him, white angels trod
About His feet, and sang in His acclaim ;—
He heard awhile, then shrieked, his heart to ease,
'What shall *thy* glorious monarch do for these ?'

CARLYLE

MOST like that prophet Israelite of old,
Fallen upon a gross and purblind world,
The lightning of whose great rebuke was hurled
In tempest blasts of words in thunder rolled,
Upon a harlot-brood, and overbold,
That bowed no knee to God in holy awe,
But dwelt in wantonness and scorn of law,
And walked in purple and the pride of gold.
Or like a black volcano, when apace
It hails from out its crater fire and stone,
Belching a flaming ruin madly down
Its gaunt and scarréd sides, not caring though
Green pastures burn, if with its fiery flow
It crush the wicked city at its base.

THEOCRITUS

'SWEET is the pine, and sweet its whispering
Beside the brook'—when was a lovelier note
Than thine e'er fluted from a poet's throat?
At the first magic chord my soul takes wing
For the delightful world, that thou dost sing—
The happy shepherds and the noontide hours,
The blunt-nosed bees that tumble thro' the
flowers,
The flocks that crop the herbage by the spring.

Cool, as an early summer morn, thy song
Fans my hot brow, and reading I am laid
In shadows of an upland forest-glade,
Where water bubbles, and the grass is long,
And leafy boughs o'erarch and frame for me
Calm spaces of the blue Sicilian sea.

T. E. BROWN

Written for the 'Cliftonian'

HE hath passed from us now, whose generous soul
Gave us so lavishly its affluent store
Of wisdom, and the voice we hear no more,
Which, at the thought-flash in a thunder-roll
Leapt out, and laid on us austere control,
That we might ne'er forget life's nobler aims ;
Nor, dragged in triumph by low worldly claims,
Lapse miserably unto a meaner goal.

Yea, for we had in him a king of men,
Who oftentimes outsoared our narrow view,
And stood on peaks of life beyond our ken,
And caught a glory that we never knew,
But straightway turned to walk with us again,
If haply thither he might guide us too.

CHARLES DICKENS

O SUREST voice to help to happiness,
Brave wholesome teacher for all minds that shrink
 In timorous disgust upon the brink
Of actual life, and turn in weariness
To hidden bowers, far from the noise and stress
 Of towns—O, heart to make us pause and
 think
If we have ever felt the human link
Which bound all men to thee, to soothe and bless.

Large reconciler, mighty in thy mirth,
And sympathy with every type here given ;
 Finding in each some touch of quickening
 leaven ;
True Christian, by that all-encircling girth
 Of love, still striving for the Master's Heaven,
And perfect fellowship of men on earth.

IMPORTUNITY

AMID low-lying meadows where the sea
Breathes to the ear soft murmurs as of sleep,
At night on hills where stars watch o'er the
sheep,
Beneath tall pines, whose secrets are set free
At the wind's touch, in sighs of melody,
Beside the level mere, where willows weep,
By torrents rushing white adown the steep,
I ever call on God to be with thee.

While sun or moon or stars shine on me still,
I shall pray Him to keep thy beauty fair,
To let it shine like sunlight everywhere ;
And were Fate set to mar thee or to kill,
This importunity of potent prayer
Should vex Him, till He answer, ' Have thy will.'

TO 'A YOUNG LADY'

You are grown trebly fair, since Love did lead
 You captive—this new beauty of your face
 Love's gentle thoughts alone could trace,
 And in the Heaven of your eyes we read
 The deeper knowledge of the holy creed
 That you have learnt from Him—O, these
 dear looks
 Love gave! confess it—you've put by the
 books
 You said could satisfy the 'highest need'!

 Now are you as green pasture to men's gaze,
 And all the sweet and bloom of summer
 flowers
 Lives in your face, since you have wandered
 hours
 Where Love did lead you down leaf-hidden ways,
 And whispered you, what grace 'tis yours to
 win,
 If like the lilies you nor toil nor spin!

A VISION IN THE NIGHT

SUDDEN I woke upon the deep midnight,
And where the moon a quiet glory shed
Slantwise upon the wall before my bed,
Pale and upturned to meet her silver light,
I saw a face, immovable and bright,
That, with full, lustrous eyes unwearied,
Gazed afar off, nor ever turned its head,
A solemn figure, pure and ghostly white.

‘Who, led by restless dreams, is here?’ I cried,
And from the bed I leaped with outstretched
hand,
But like a wind the vision passed and died,
And I drew backward quickly, half unmanned,
And knew my senses strangely thus belied :—
My boyhood’s soul I saw in worship stand.

FALSE SHAPES

THE artist's soul not easily can be won,
And if not wholly won, what state more ill
Than his, who, with false shapes his eye doth fill,
Casting a counter glare of self upon
Each beam that thro' his growing darkness shone
To hint an ampler world that he might see,
Bright in its generous variety
Under the large warmth of the impartial sun.

O, pity such, whom shadows close around,
Who but distorts all Nature with sick eyes,
And fashions Her to suit his maladies,
Who never is in silent worship found,
But lends Her of his little soul, and cries,
'Behold, with what new grace Her ways are
crowned!'

A PRAYER

I EDDY aimless, all too weak to stay
The life that wraps me in a vesture spun
Of poisoned threads, whose fumes blot out the
sun
And drowse my senses, lest by night or day
The hour of silence come, when He shall say,
‘Render account, O Soul ; what hast thou done
With this, My talent, for I gave thee one ?’
And I must answer, ‘Lord, ’twas hid away.’

Shamed with this thought, O grant me to be free
From this the life that bred it ; if Thy will
Forbids that I should use Thy talent ill,
Then place me where Thou first didst speak to
me,
What time I heard beneath the moonlight still
The trampling white ranks of the strong-voiced sea.

TO MY WIFE
WITH THE THREE FOLLOWING SONGS.

THREE songs for singing, slight, of little prize,
More than enough for them and me,
If on thy voice I hear them sometimes rise
Into *thy* world of harmony.

FOR MUSIC

I AM going out with the tide, Jean,
I am going out with the tide ;
Open the window wide, Jean,
That I may smell the sea !

There's a ship there lying, Jean,
Asleep in the shining bay ;
She's waiting for me, Jean,
To carry me away !

And I will sail in her, Jean,
Beyond the fading day ;
And whither I go, I may not know ;
But, Jean, have no fear,
For the ways of the sea are one to me,
When Death Himself must steer.

FOR MUSIC

THOUGH many miles away, my heart is there
With thee, my sweet ;
I see thy lovers in despair
Fall at thy feet.

And like a rose with splendour and perfume,
Thy flower-like face
Lights up and filleth all the room
With radiant grace.

How shall I win dear sleep, from thee away,
Others so near ?
Ah pardon what I seemed to say,
Love's full of fear !

That thou art happy O my love, to-night,
I truly trow,
That I am not forgotten quite,
O, might I know !

FOR MUSIC

SLEEP, sleep, my darling sleep,
Thro' the night calm and deep,
On thy cheek June roses keep
Steadfast watch.

Sleep, sleep, sunbeams peep
From thy hair ;
Sleep, sleep, with parted lip,
Red rose's match.

And would I were
A bee to sip,
Those blossoms fair !

Sleep, sleep, my darling sleep,
And when day is here,
Lift thy lids, and Heaven is there.

ROSES, ROSES, RED AND WHITE

THE rose is withered on the tree
And my dear love is far from me,
The winter cometh on apace,
And I no longer see her face.
Ah, sorrow, sorrow, night and day,
For my love that's ta'en away !

Roses, Roses, red and white
When the days were warm and bright,
Why did I refuse to hear
What you whispered in my ear ?
'Take your kisses while you may,
Love will not for ever stay.'
Ah, sorrow, sorrow, night and day,
For the truth that you did say !

Roses, Roses, red and white
Had I known that you were right,
I had conquered all my doubt,
And had drawn the honey out

From those lips in one long kiss,
Which I now so madly miss,
Sighing, sighing, night and day,
For the blossom ta'en away !

Roses, Roses, white and red,
Had I heeded what you said
When the skies were warm and blue,
I should not behold in you
Dry and withered, parched and dead,
Emblems of my passion too !
But the words that you did say
On that sunny summer day
I forgot, and now in vain
I shall seek my love again !

TELEPATHY

THRO' the green garden that our footsteps know
I wandered all alone this early dawn.
It was not clear with an excess of light,
But all the sky was mantled in black folds
Of cloud—a dark and doubtful dawn it was—
Dark were the trees, and dark the border-shrubs,
Whereunder red geraniums did burn
Slowly and inconsuately, like lamps,
That night and day in dim secluded shrines
Of a cathedral, thro' the dusky gloom
With incense heavy, like a jewel glow.
And, as, when in a theatre, a ghost,
Far in a corner of the darkened stage,
Lurking in luminous silence, is descried,
All the spectators, in a breathless hush,
Wait for the thing to speak and move, so I
In the dark garden, waited for thy soul
To speak to mine, and with a hundred eyes,
Like grave magicians, all the trees did seem
To watch and fix me, with a potent spell

There as I stood—when—lo, a sudden wind
Ran rippling in the leaves, and thro' the clouds
The sun smote him a path with spears of gold,
And touched the trees with glory—and I knew
Even then thy heart reply to mine, with love
For love, across the long miles of the world.

MEMORIES

I DREAMED I was a boy once more,
And walking by his side,
I felt the sun upon my cheek,
'Twas morn and summertide.

We brushed aside the meadow grass,
All bright and wet with dew,
And came unto the river bank,
And caught a flash of blue.

The king fisher, I saw him plain,
The first that I had seen ;
He told again about the bird
('Twas just as it had been).

We sat upon the river bank,
And thro' the water bright,
I saw the dace come round my bait,
With breathless quick delight.

And just as I prepared to strike,
A water-vole fellplash

Into the stream, and quick away
They darted in a flash.

And then we changed our fishing ground.
The water was too clear,
' You will not catch a fish,' he said,
' If you try for a year.'

And next we crept beneath a tree,
It was so dark and cool,
And from the bank its roots struck out
Into a deep black pool.

And there with heart and hand aglow,
I waited mighty fish,
But still alas my steady float
Bemocked my eager wish.

And then he said the words again,
On which I've often thought ;
' A fisherman should never care
If he has sport or not.

' If he is wise he'll learn to love
The beauty that is round,
A river bank is always rich
In natural sight and sound.'

He told me too about a book,
Which I one day must read,
That makes the sport of fishermen
The king of sports indeed.

And at his words I minded less
To leave my rod and line,
And on we walked unto the place,
Where shallows dance and shine ;

And saw again the water-vole,
And heard him munch the reed ;—
I knew the flowers that near him grew,
Figwort and willow weed.

'Twas all as clear as on that day,
In boyhood's morning bright,
Each word he said, each thing we saw,
Came back in dreams last night.

TO MY MOTHER

'His' Garden

SURELY he comes sometimes to see
 The garden of his care,
 Without his gentle ministry
 How are the flowers so fair ?

I think he walks its pathways yet,
 At early summer dawn,
 And tends the standard roses set
 About the sloping lawn.

For him it is the lilies blow
 So white and straight and tall,
 And companies of phloxes glow
 Beneath the ivied wall.

For him thy window still is hung
 With roses and green leaves ;
 He hears the swallows feed their young
 In nests beneath the eaves.

He looks across the hawthorn hedge,
Up to the pines that stand
Below the cliff-top's broken ledge,
Dark 'gainst its golden sand.

For him the hills about the bay,
Still fade into the blue,
And on the beach the waves in play,
White wreaths of flowers strew.

Yes still he comes, and with glad tears
Looks round the garden fair,
But loves it best, because he hears
Thy heart still beating there.

DAS LEBENDIGES KLEID

OUT of her love she weaves
 This lovely robe, by which
 His eye receives
The image of her intimate soul ;
 In various dyes, how rich
 It is and generous ; the whole
 In pattern and design
 How exquisitely fine !
'Tis hourly wrought,
 With studious ministry,
Out of the threads innumerable,
 Of feeling and of thought,
 The nice dependencies,
 She cannot count or tell,
By which she holds to him
 In simple loyalty.
Age cannot spoil, nor time bedim
 Its delicate traceries ;
'Tis wholly hers, and when she dies,
 Perchance in 'other spheres'

It shall become her well
As wedding raiment, when,
 After long sundered years,
A second time his bride,
 He gathers her again,
Unto his side.

THE ATLANTIC LINER

I WATCHED a great Atlantic liner go
At sunset out to sea—loud winds did blow
And breakers roared—but over all I heard
The titan pulses of her screw below.

She headed far into the deepening night,
The strong seas fell back, cloven left and right
Before her bows, as in majestic strength
She sallied forth to conquer, come what might.

The furious seas of inland creeks and bays,
That made men tremble in the elder days
For their weak hulls, fall on her iron sides
Like April rains, or summer fountain-sprays.

Onward she speeds—the smitten seas behind
Seethe white—they know her power, and every
wind
May lash them into rage—'tis all in vain,
Her ways are not for them to hold or bind.

Not all the volume of the waves that roll,
Can ever turn her from her purposed goal,
A thousand men draw breath within her frame,
And know that they are safe in her control.

SIMILES

HER brow is white,
As white hawthorn
In pale moonlight.

Her eyes are as
Pearled drops of morn
On the clear grass.

Her hair is gold,
As honey torn
Fresh from its mould.

Her lips are red,
As a rose worn
On a dark head.

Her voice is sweet,
As lark's upborne
The day to greet.

Her smile is bright,
As star's forlorn,
'Twixt clouds of night.

Her movement's grace
Hath the green corn,
When the winds race.

SAPPHO

Ἵαρᾳ δ' ἐρχεθ' ὥρα

NO voice except the troubled sea's—no light
 Save where between black clouds, before he set,
 The sun hath hung a golden amulet—
 Far off the purple mountains fade from sight,
 And pass in peace into the arms of night.
 Only the long dark waves still foam and fret,
 And cannot once their toil forget,
 Vexing the patient shore in vain despite.

Though all things rest—not I, and thou O Sea !
 For I am all fulfilled with anxious strife
 As thou, and like thee with one passion rife
 I cry, and stretch out hands to clasp to me
 One love, who mocks the endeavour of my life,
 And spurns me always, as the land spurns thee.

'POET TO MUSE.'

I CANNOT once forget thee or forego,
Did not thy love make earth for me first sweet,
And show God's guidance present for my feet,
Lend to the hillside grass and flowers that blow,
A brighter radiance, all men cannot know ?
Clear faith and hope and child's simplicity
Have not I learnt to cherish fast thro' thee,
And all good things which these alone bestow ?

If there are none or few who understand,
How thou art all my good, why should I care ?
I only know that all which men name fair,
Was given to me from thy most bounteous hand,
And while my life is under thy command
I climb still heavenward by a golden stair.



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